

VZCZCXRO1290

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DE RUEHVB #0271/01 0811019  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 211019Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8775  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ZAGREB 000271

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FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA  
OSD FOR WINTERNITZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - MARCH 20, 2008

1. (U) A/S SILVERBERG VISITS CROATIA

The U.S. Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Kristen Silverberg visited Croatia 17-18 March to discuss United Nations Security Council issues. The A/S met with senior officials from the MFA and the Offices of the President and Prime Minister, as well as representatives from Croatia's academic community. The visit highlighted the strong cooperation thus far between the U.S. and the GoC, and Croatian officials expressed their commitment to work closely with the U.S. and EU to address the difficult issues facing the Council in the coming months. The GoC identified Kosovo and Iran as among the most pressing issues on the Council's agenda. Both countries also hope to re-energize the UN's Counterterrorism Committee, which Croatia currently leads. The A/S concluded her visit by hosting a roundtable with students from Croatia's Diplomatic Academy. Approximately 45 young diplomats participated in the presentation/Q-and-A session focused on U.S. foreign policy and priorities at the UN. A more detailed report will be sent septel. (CRhoton)

2. (U) U.S. DOJ ABLE TO FACILITATE TESTIMONY IN CROATIAN WAR CRIMES TRIAL

Recently, a Croatian County Court Judge requested US Department of Justice assistance in obtaining testimony from four witnesses in the United States for the high profile war crimes trial of two Croatian generals, Rahim Ademi and Mirko Norac. U.S. authorities were able to locate the witnesses. The first testified via videolink on March 18. The second is scheduled to testify on March 28, while the third has yet to be contacted, but is expected to testify on March 27. The final witness located by U.S. authorities is unwilling to testify and has been deemed an endangered witness. Given the witness' protected status and safety concerns, Croatian and U.S. authorities agreed that it is not necessary, nor appropriate, to attempt further compulsory measures to obtain his testimony. This case illustrates the excellent cooperation and successful international legal assistance between the Croatian judiciary and the U.S. Department of Justice. (VDjukic)

3. (U) ZAGREB CONTINUES VISA PROCESSING FOR SERBIANS AND MONTENEGRINS

The Consular Section continues to process visa applications for Serbian and Montenegrin citizens on behalf of Embassy Belgrade. Since the closure of Embassy Belgrade's consular section on February 21 after the attack on the Embassy by Serbians protesting Kosovo's declaration of independence, Zagreb has processed nearly 500 nonimmigrant visa applications for Serbians and Montegrins, as well as a number of immigrant visas and U.S. passports for customers normally served by Belgrade. The consular section continues to provide its normal level of service to Croatian citizens while handling this additional caseload. Visa appointment

wait times remain under three days. Embassy Zagreb's prompt designation as an alternative visa processing site during Embassy Belgrade's closure was noted favorably by both the Serbian and Montenegrin press, which both credit the USG for pushing the German Embassy in Belgrade, also damaged during the protests, to make similar arrangements for emergency service. Embassy Belgrade's consular section is expected to reopen in early April. (RElvikis)

14. (U) NEW SYNAGOGUE OPENS IN ZAGREB - 67 YEARS AFTER WWII  
On Sunday, March 16, Croatia's Bet Israel Jewish community celebrated the opening of Zagreb's new synagogue. With speeches by Bet Israel's Rabbi Kotel Dadon, Dr. Ivo Goldstein (president of Bet Israel), and numerous rabbis from across Europe and the United States, the event was a major step for the Bet Israel community, which was registered in 2006 after splitting from the larger and older Jewish Community of Zagreb (or ZOZ - Zidovska Opcina Zagreba). The donation of the synagogue's Torah by Jewish communities based in both Chicago and Los Angeles continued unofficial ties between Jewish religious communities on both sides of the Atlantic. In attendance at the event were President Mesic, Deputy-Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor, Zagreb Mayor Milan Bandic, and Ministers from the GOC Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sport, reflecting the strong political will to promote religious tolerance in Croatia. Although the reconstruction of the central synagogue on the original 1941 site is still a key goal for the ZOZ, the opening of the new Bet Israel temple is a step in the right direction towards continuing the promotion of international religious freedom in Croatia. (DFisk)

15. (U) U.S. AND CROATIA REACH OPEN SKIES AGREEMENT  
A State-DOT delegation initialed an Open Skies agreement with Croatia on March 13 after two days of talks in Zagreb. This

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was the second round of negotiations on Open Skies, the first being held in Washington from Sept 27-28, 2007. Conclusion of this agreement caps two years of steady efforts to secure GOC support and achieves a key goal of post's Mission Strategic Plan. This agreement lays the foundation for the further development of our civil aviation relationship with Croatia. Post will remain actively engaged in these issues with the GOC to help make sure that the traveling publics of both of our countries can reap the benefits of this agreement. (See Zagreb 254 for more details) (NBerliner) Bradtke